

TOP 5 WEATHER EVENTS OF 2015



National Weather Service – Billings, MT
December 30, 2015

These weather events were voted upon by several of our meteorologists and deemed the five most intriguing. Obviously, there were several other impactful weather events that occurred throughout the course of the year. Enjoy!

#5: May 24-26 Flooding along the Eastern Slopes of the Bighorn Mountains

Heavy rains combined with snow melt out of the Bighorn Mountains brought flooding to portions of Sheridan. Little Goose Creek reached moderate flooding levels. Two subdivisions south of Sheridan were hit hard. Woodland Hills experienced water, up to about 2 feet, running over the road. Just to the north, water at Woodland Park Village reached about 8 feet at the bridge. Volunteers pulled debris out of the water to prevent the bridge from washing out. In



Photo courtesy of Big Horn Mountain Radio

Sheridan proper, South Park was almost completely under water, as was a portion of the field directly south of Brundage. There were also reports of flooding along Big Goose Creek above Kendrick Park. In addition, Mavrakis Pond near 8th Street in Sheridan was over its banks on the east side.

Here are some precipitation totals on May 24-25:

Sheridan	1.80 inches (1.74 inches on the 24 th was a daily record)
Dayton	2.67 inches
Big Horn	2.84 inches
Story	3.23 inches



Photo courtesy of Paul Birkholz



Photo courtesy of Sheridan Media

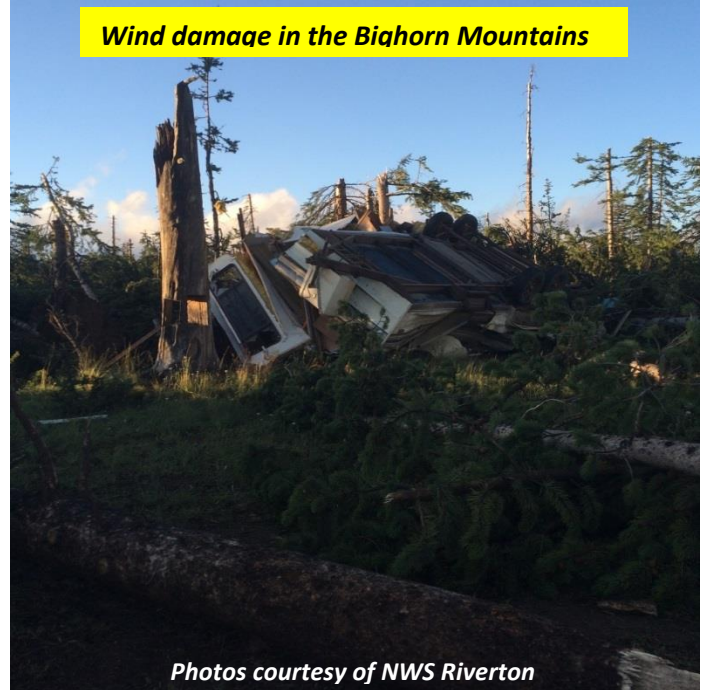
#4: June 10 Severe Thunderstorm near Shepherd

A severe and slow-moving thunderstorm produced heavy rain, significant hail and flash flooding just north of Shepherd. Radar estimated 3 to 5 inches of rain fell in about an hour. Fast-moving water flowed across portions of Pleasant Hollow Trail, which resulted in some of the road being eroded. In addition, significant amounts of small hail, resembling large snow drifts, piled up in several places. Up to golf ball sized hail was reported with this storm.



#3: July 27-28 Severe Thunderstorms & Strong Winds, Including a Microburst in the Bighorn Mountains

The combination of severe thunderstorms and a strong cold front produced strong winds across the central and eastern plains. A thunderstorm-induced wind gust of 75 mph was observed at Miles City on the 27th, where trees and power lines were downed, and some roofs were damaged. Wind gusts in excess of 60 mph were also reported at Hammond, Mill Iron, Baker, Rock Springs and near Broadus. Hail to the size of half dollars was reported northwest of Miles City. In the Bighorn Mountains, a microburst (strong downdraft from a thunderstorm) produced winds estimated at 90-100 mph and snapped numerous large trees. Two camper trailers were completely destroyed, and 1.5 inch hail also caused damage. The damage occurred in a 2-3 mile swath along Highway 14A near Bald Mountain. On the 28th, following the cold frontal passage, mixing of strong winds aloft resulted in a remarkably windy day for late July. Many locations gusted frequently over 50 mph, and Baker had a peak wind of 60 mph. With an average speed of 21.9 mph, this was the windiest July day on record at Billings.



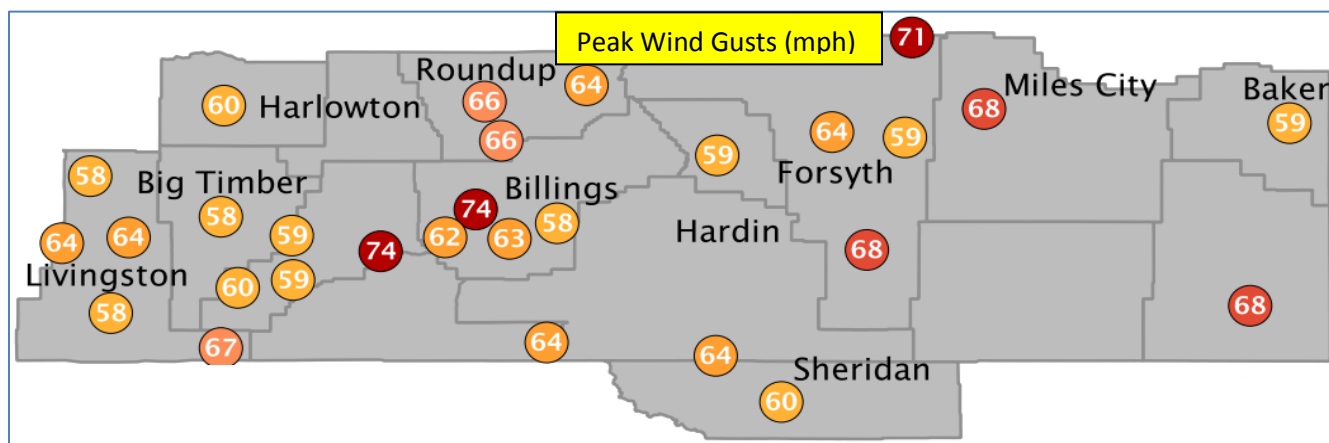
#2: June 19 Severe Thunderstorms

Severe thunderstorms impacted portions of the central and eastern plains on this day. One notable storm occurred in the city of Billings. This storm produced hail, strong winds and very heavy rain in Billings, with accumulating hail in parts of south Billings, along with some downed trees and power lines. Heavy rain produced street flooding in the city. Hail up to the size of golf balls was reported south of the Yellowstone River. A wind gust of 78 mph was measured at the National Weather Service office on the west end. Elsewhere, 2 inch hail and 70 mph wind gusts occurred near Busby. A semi-truck was blown over on Highway 212 near Lame Deer. Tennis ball sized hail was reported at Baker. Baseball sized hail occurred north of Broadus, where car and house damage was reported. Very large hail up to the size of softballs (4.25 inches) was reported near Hammond.



#1: March 28 Hot, Dry & Windy with Wildfires

The number one weather event of 2015 was the remarkably hot, dry and windy day in late March that produced critical fire weather conditions. A strong upper level disturbance and associated cold front moved rapidly across the northern Rockies on Saturday March 28th. The system produced widespread severe wind, with peak gusts ranging from 60 to 70 mph, along with critical fire weather conditions. The severe wind occurred during the afternoon when temperatures were at record levels and humidities were in the teens. As a result, several wildfires occurred during the afternoon and early evening. The event was preceded by a late winter and early spring of below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures, which set up unseasonably dry fuel conditions. The high winds also resulted in numerous power outages along with minor home/roof and tree damage.



SITE	MAX TEMPERATURE	MINIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY
Livingston	70	21 %
Billings	* 80	12 %
Miles City	* 83	18 %
Sheridan	* 80	12 %

* These temperatures were records for the day, and the warmest it's ever been so early in the season.

Two wildfires that resulted in the greatest impacts were located near Red Lodge Mountain and near I-90 between Park City and Columbus. The **Pine Crest Fire** (near Park City) burned 3000 acres. Two homes were lost and one firefighter suffered a minor injury. In addition, a 20-mile stretch of Interstate 90 was closed for several hours due to smoke and low visibilities. Before the interstate closed, a multi-vehicle accident occurred, resulting in one fatality and several other injuries.



The **West Fork** Fire near Red Lodge, which started shortly after noon on the 28th, charred about 600 acres and threatened homes near Red Lodge as skiers were escorted off the mountain. The fire started when high winds fanned a hot spot from a controlled burn in the Land Estates Subdivision from a few days prior. Fire officials closed Ski Run Road while they battled the blaze, which jumped West Fork Road. No one was allowed to enter or leave Red Lodge Mountain. Around 3 pm, skiers in their vehicles were escorted off the mountain by Carbon County officials.

